Minor problems don't slow Ribeiro

Editor's note: Tasman Motorsports driver Andre Ribeiro is making his first trip to Michigan International Speedway this weekend and giving Citizen Patriot readers his views of the track. Here is the second day of the Sao Paulo, Brazil, native's diary as told to sports editor Tommy Cameron:

After having the best practice time Friday, I was disappointed in one way after qualifying 10th on Saturday, but I still felt good in another because I know we have a good car and a good engine for the race.

We went out in the morning practice and scuffed tires for qualifying, but then we we had some problem with the popoff valve and lost some power on the straightaway. The Honda engineers are looking into it now.

I'm looking forward to an easy race. I'm told that when your car is handling good, it's not difficult. I don't know, though . . . 500 miles and three hours is a long time. I'm told that if you're car is not handling well, it's a difficult thing.

ANDRE RIBEIRO
Marlboro 500 Diary

I'm happy because my crew had done a great job giving me a good car, and the track is very smooth. I know we're ready for the race.

This track is a lot different than Indianapolis. The corners are wider here. There, you can only get one car through the corners, and you have to slow down. Here, there are a lot of lines through the corners. I don't know if there are a lot of fast lines, but I'll find out during the race. I imagine I'll have a lot of time to learn about driving this oval track in a 500-mile race.

I'm getting a lot of help from the more experienced drivers here — whatever I need. Whenever I need anything at any track, I always go to Emerson Fittipaldi. He's very open with me, and I know he's always honest with me, and I know I can trust him.

Running through traffic here shouldn't be a problem, because there are so many lines.

I'll find out which are the fast ones. But I don't see it being a problem.

Saturday night, I have a promotion dinner to go to, but I'll try to get to bed as early as possible. Then I'll get up at 6:40 to get the track for the 9:30 practice.

I do a lot of physical exercise during the season, and I'll do the same thing this weekend.

In this race, if the car is good, I shouldn't have a problem, even if it is a three-hour race, unless it gets really hot.

I know some people have said they don't think the Honda engine will finish the race, because this track is so hard on engines.

But I've never had a problem with the Honda before, and I don't expect to have any problems with it today.

I'll be keeping the pedal on the floor.

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MARLBORO 500/IROC

Al Unser Jr. waves to the crowd after winning the International Race of Champions at MIS on Saturday. Unser won the race, but the overall points championship in the IROC series went to Dale Earnhardt.

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